WINGS of COURAGE

BY GEORGE SAND

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WINGS *of* COURAGE

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

BIG AND LITTLE BROTHER
A Story of Swedish Life

By GUSTAV AV GEIJERSTAM
translated by
BURTON B. LIFSCHULTZ

Other Titles in Preparation

∴

THOMAS S. ROCKWELL COMPANY
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It was just like a little house, hollowed out of the hill, with a stone bench and a place for a fire

WINGS of COURAGE

By

GEORGE SAND

Translated for Story-Teller's House
from the original French

By

BURTON BENJAMIN LIFSCHULTZ

Drawings by

JOHN DUKES MCKEE

THOMAS S. ROCKWELL COMPANY
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1931

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LES AILES DU COURAGE

IT IS hard to believe that a delightful tale like Wings of Courage, by an author of such note as George Sand, has remained in comparative obscurity. The romantic way of writing may be somewhat outmoded so far as we adults are concerned, but children will always love stories of this type. They delight in seeing virtue triumphant, in having riches succeed honest poverty, in the overcoming of almost insurmountable obstacles by the weak and oppressed. If the truth must be told, I suspect we older ones do likewise, but are not sufficiently naive to admit it.

Wings of Courage has all of these elements. Little Clopinet is a cripple—he overcomes his lameness; he is desperately poor—he becomes wealthy; he is honorable and virtuous—and gains fame and respect, but is modest withal. This is but a bald analysis of a lovely tale, and says nothing of the delightful adventures of Clopinet—his cave refuge, his taming of the birds, his adventures with the hunchback, his friendship with the nobility. It does not take into account the beauty of the author's style, the pure

simplicity with which the story unfolds; nor does it mention the fidelity of the translator to the original, by which the whole charm of the original has been retained.

These I leave to the reader to discover for himself.

PHILIP SCHUYLER ALLEN
Professor of German Literature
The University of Chicago

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WINGS *of* COURAGE

He ran across the orchard with Clopinet on his back

Chapter I WINGS OF FEAR

THREE leagues from the sea in Normandy lies the valley of Auge. In a part of the valley near Saint-Pierre D'Az lived a good peasant and his wife. They had become fairly prosperous through long years of hard work. The land in the valley was poorly cultivated. Pastures and apple orchards appeared in stretches marked by an occasional grove of walnut trees. Here and there were little gardens and houses made of dried mud. The people of the valley raised good cattle, made excellent butter and famous cheeses. At that time there were no railways or great highways. Rich landowners had not built in the valley and the peasants had no one to buy their products. So they contented themselves

with raising enough fruits and vegetables for their own use.

The good peasant and his wife were known throughout the valley as Papa Doucy and Mama Doucette, which means gentle Papa and Mama. They had many children who spent their days working hard, living life cheerfully and without complaint, and plodding along to earn a little money with which to buy land.

But one of the children was different from the others. He hardly ever worked at all. This was Clopinet. Clopinet was lame and that was how he came to be called by his name, which means to hobble. But he was not a sickly or weak boy in spite of his infirmity. He was rosy-cheeked and hale and hearty. The reason that he did not like to work was because he had other plans for himself. He wanted to become a sailor! If he had been asked what a sailor was, he would have hung his head shyly for he was scarcely ten years old when the idea entered his mind. This is how it happened.

He had an uncle, his mother's brother, who had sailed away on a merchant vessel at a very early age and had seen a great deal of the world. The uncle lived on the coast at Trouville and came to visit the Doucys at long intervals. Whenever he

came he told marvelous tales of his travels that were probably not always true, but which Clopinet did not doubt in the least because they were so exciting. And so the little boy dreamed of setting off to sea himself, though he had never seen it and did not know exactly what it was.

The sea was not far away. He could have gone there in spite of his lameness if his father had not objected to this idea of leaving the valley. It was not the custom in those days for young boys to go away from home. The eldest brothers went to the market or the fair when it was necessary. Otherwise they all spent their days taking care of the herds or working in the garden.

Clopinet was listless and dreamy. When he led the cows to pasture, instead of amusing himself by making reed baskets or building mud houses as his brothers did, he gazed at the clouds. He loved to watch the birds of passage flying toward the sea. "How happy they are," he thought wistfully. "They have wings and can go where they please. They can see the whole world and never get tired!"

Clopinet watched the birds so constantly that he soon learned to recognize them by their flight, no matter how high up in the air they were. He knew their traveling habits—how the cranes formed ar-

row shapes in order to cut the air currents, how the starlings flew in thick groups, how the birds of prey swooped through the air, and how the wild geese kept pace at an equal distance in a straight-line formation. He was always happy when he saw the birds of passage, and he often tried to run as fast as they flew. It was a useless task, for he could only run a dozen steps in the time they had traveled a league and were lost to sight.

But in spite of his dreams, Clopinet remained at home. Perhaps it was because he was lame—or perhaps his courage was not as great as his curiosity. One day when the sailor uncle came to visit the family, Clopinet said bravely:

"Uncle, I should like to go to sea with you if my father will allow it."

"You?" said Papa Doucy, smiling. "Better not talk about that. You can't even walk right and you are afraid of everything. Never bother yourself with that young scamp, brother-in-law. He is a weakling and a coward. One day last year he hid himself in the fagots because he had seen a sooty chimney-sweep which he took for the devil. He can't look at the tailor who comes to make our clothes without crying because he is a hunchback. If a dog barks or a cow looks at him or an apple

falls, away he flies. You can well say that here is one who has come into the world with wings of fear fastened to his shoulders!"

"Time will change all that," answered Uncle Laquille. "In childhood one has wings of fear. Later one grows wings of another kind."

These words greatly astonished little Clopinet.

"I have no wings," he said. "My father is making fun of me. But perhaps he would get some for me if I went to sea."

"Your uncle ought to have some," replied Papa Doucy. "Ask him to show them to you."

"I have them when I need them," said the sailor, with a dreamy look in his eyes, "but they are wings of courage to carry me into danger."

Clopinet thought these words were beautiful and he never forgot them. Papa Doucy, however, took all the pride out of his brother-in-law by telling him: "I don't say you have not those wings when you have to do your duty, but when you get home you are not so brave, for your wife clips them off!"

Papa Doucy said that because Mother Laquille ruled the household with an iron hand, while Mother Doucette on the contrary was completely devoted and obedient to her husband. It was because of this state of affairs that the good woman

did not dare to encourage Clopinet's ideas which her husband did not even want to hear mentioned. Papa Doucy said that the life of a sailor was too hard for a lad with one leg weaker than the other. Indeed Clopinet was not even strong enough to till the soil. There was nothing for him to do but to learn the tailoring trade.

And so one day when the tailor came to the Doucy house, Papa Doucy said to him: "Tire-à-gauche,* my friend, we have not any work to give you this year, but here is a lad who is anxious to learn your trade. I will pay you something for apprenticing him if you will be reasonable and satisfied with what I offer you. A year from now he will be able to help you do all your work and to be your little partner, earning his livelihood from you."

"How much will you give?" said the tailor, looking at Clopinet out of the corner of his eye with a somewhat disdainful air.

While the peasant and the tailor were discussing the conditions of the bargain in low whispers, Clopinet, who had not the slightest desire to sew, looked at the master to whom he was being sold. The tailor was a hunchback, short, and lame in both

**Tire-a-gauche* means Pull-to-the-left. The tailor was called this because he was left-handed and drew the needle the opposite way from other tailors.

legs. Perhaps if he had been untwisted and stretched out full length, he might have been large. But he was so broken-down and bent, that when he walked he was no taller than Clopinet, who at that time was twelve years old and not very large for his age. Tire-à-gauche must have been fifty years old. He had squinting eyes and an enormous yellow bald head that looked like a large cucumber. He was dressed in miserable tatters made from the castoff garments of his customers which he had rescued from the dung-heap. The most horrible thing about him were his feet and hands which were of extraordinary length and very agile. His eye was scarcely able to follow the flash of his large needle so quickly did his hands move, and he raised a whirl-wind of dust when he walked swiftly by.

Clopinet had seen Tire-à-gauche many times before and he had never failed to find him dreadfully ugly. Today he found him absolutely frightful. The little boy felt weighted down with fear of the old tailor, and if he had not remembered the wings of fear that his father had spoken of, he would have run away.

When the bargain was complete, Doucy and the tailor shook hands and clinked their mugs of cider. Mother Doucette, who knew all that had taken place,

left the room silently to tie up the belongings of the poor child who must go with the tailor for three long years.

Up to this time, Clopinet had not really believed what was happening. He had not realized that it would all be settled so soon, and that he would actually have to go with the tailor against his own will. But to refuse to go or to offer any resistance did not occur to him, for he was a sweet and submissive child. When he saw his mother leave the room, avoiding his gaze as if she were afraid she might burst into tears, he saw his misfortune and rushed after her to beg her to help him.

He did not have time to reach her. The tailor stretched out his arm and grabbed the boy as a spider seizes a fly. Then planting Clopinet on his humped back and clasping the scrawny little legs over his shoulders, he said to Papa Doucy: "All right, it is settled now. We'll let his mother cry. She will cry less if she does not see him any more. Let her go on packing his duds. You can forward them to Dives tomorrow. I am going to spend three days there. Now, my good child, be quiet and do not cry or I will cut your tongue out with my good scissors which you see hanging from my belt."

"Treat him kindly," said the father. "He is not

"How much will you give?" said the tailor, looking at Clopinet out of the corner of his eye

mischievous at all and will do everything you ask him willingly."

"All right, all right," answered the tailor, "don't you worry about him. I will make it my business—come now, don't get tender-hearted or I will refuse to take him."

"At least let me kiss him good-by," said Papa Doucy. "When a child leaves home——"

"But you will see him again. He will come with me to work at your house. This good-by must be without a scene, without any tears, or I will leave him. I am not getting so much for apprenticing him, you know."

Speaking thus, Tire-à-gauche crossed the threshold of the house and began to run across the apple orchard with Clopinet on his back. The child began to cry. There was a lump in his throat and his teeth chattered with fright. He looked back toward his house anxiously. The thought of obeying this ugly old man did not hurt him as much as not being able to kiss his parents good-by. He could not understand the cruel treatment. He saw his mother running out of the house holding her arms toward him, and he shouted "Mama" in the midst of his stifled sobbing. She came nearer as if she were trying to catch up to the tailor, but Papa Doucy held her

back. François, the older brother, cried out loudly and shook his fist threateningly at the tailor. But Tire-à-gauche only laughed, a frightful laugh which sounded like a saw grating on a stone, and he doubled his pace—that gigantic pace which was impossible to follow.

Clopinet who had seen his mother fall back in her husband's arms, thought that she was dead and he wanted to die, too. He dropped his head upon the monstrous humped shoulder of the tailor and lost consciousness.

The tailor, finding him heavy and thinking him asleep, put him down on the grass. Then the old man went to get his donkey which he had left browsing in a pasture near-by. The donkey was as small and lame and ugly as its master. Tire-à-gauche dealt the beast a kick to make it go and the donkey put back its ear and ran off as quick as a flash, leaving his master standing there.

So the tailor lay down to take a nap until the beast returned. In a little while Clopinet opened his eyes. He looked about him wonderingly, for he did not remember where he was. But soon his heart grew heavy as he thought of the ugly tailor. He waited, expecting the old man to appear at any moment, but when some time had passed and the

tailor had not come, he leaped to his feet joyously. He was certain that Tire-à-gauche had decided to abandon him!

Clopinet started to look for the way home. He went a few steps along the broad path which lay before him. "Ohhhh!" He stopped frozen with horror at the sight of the hunch-back stretched out a few feet in front of him, sleeping with one eye closed and the other apparently watching all that went on. A little way off the donkey was walking slowly back.

Clopinet lay down again and remained very still though his heart was beating hard. Suddenly he heard a groan as if a crow was cawing not far from him. He tiptoed back and saw that the tailor was snoring and that he was sleeping with one eye open. It must be the tailor's habit to sleep that way, thought Clopinet. He crept up to the old man, shivering at the sight of the villainous eye which kept gazing at him. But the tailor did not move; so Clopinet knew that the eye could not see. The child pulled off his clogs so that he could run better. He left the path, gained the top of a small hillock and began to descend as nimbly as a hare on the other side. He ran into a jumble of shrubs and of wild plants where he found himself completely hidden from view. He

ran for a long while. Sometimes, fearing that tailor might be in pursuit, he stopped and crouched where the grass was thickest. There he remained motionless, even holding his breath, until he was sure that it was safe to run on again.

Everything went fine. Tire-à-gauche, after sleeping for a while, woke up and saw that his prisoner had escaped. He found the marks of Clopinet's bare feet and snickered to himself. They were following the road to Dives! Poor Clopinet was running away from home instead of toward it. So the tailor resumed his journey.

"In four strides I will have overtaken him!" he laughed wickedly.

Beating and driving his donkey, Tire-à-gauche moved over the ground with his twisted legs swerving back and forth like two scythes. But thanks to the strategy of the child who had left the road and hidden himself in the thickets, the further the tailor advanced, the greater the distance grew between them.

He began to run without knowing where he was going

Chapter II CLOPINET MEETS THE SEA

IT WAS nightfall before Clopinet felt it was safe to venture forth from his hiding place. The mild spring evening was calm and cloudy. He listened before he stirred and was rather frightened by a queer noise that he heard. He imagined it was the terrible step of the tailor grating along the sand. Soon it sounded as if someone were ripping cloth, and he thought of the tailor tearing up his materials before he used the dreadful scissors. The noise kept up constantly, neither increasing nor diminishing its force and speed, without coming nearer and without ever ceasing.

It was the sea breaking at the lower end of the sandy shore. Clopinet did not recognize the sound.

He tried to peer into the darkness to make certain that no one else was in the wilderness with him. The place was strange to him. From where he stood with his head emerging from the bushes, he could see a large semicircle of dunes with dark recesses and projections. It seemed to be an immense notched wall passing beyond into empty space. This emptiness was the sea. But since Clopinet had never seen the sea and it was hidden from view by the evening mist, he could not tell it apart from the sky. He was astonished to see stars in the heavens and at the same time a peculiar brightness in the depths below. What was it? How could the poor child know when he had never seen anything—not even a large river or a little hill?

Clopinet hiked through the tall grass without daring to descend lower. He was both hungry and afraid. "I must look for a place to sleep," he thought, "because early tomorrow morning I am going to find my way home and see whether poor mother is dead or not." The thought of this made him cry, but remembering that he had been almost dead himself when the tailor carried him off, he hoped his mother had recovered, too.

He dared not sleep at the first place he found for fear of being surprised by the horrible monster that

he thought pursued him. He was a long way from the road now. He walked along cautiously, for the path was difficult. The side of the dune was not smooth enough to slide down. It was a completely isolated stretch of land, cracked open in spots and bristling with burrs. He found some large crevices hidden by the grass and the thorn-like plants, and he was afraid of falling down. Some of the hollows had water in them but luckily it was shallow. The night—the loneliness—and the danger of this strange, terrible land made Clopinet sad and fearful. Little by little a great fright enveloped his soul.

Quite discouraged he threw himself down on a thick bed of moss and tried to sleep to keep from thinking how hungry he was. It was difficult to go to sleep though. He imagined he was sliding down. He thought that something ran over him—perhaps it was a fox or a hare. He was so filled with horror that he got up and began to run without knowing where he was going. In his confusion he did not recognize the things he had seen in the daylight. He went from one hollow to another, and he felt as if he were flying above the earth instead of running along the ground. Large ridges on the dunes loomed up to terrify him. They were like giants standing there, shaking their heads. Each

black shrub seemed to be a crouching beast ready to spring upon him. Fantastic ideas and memories of things he had long since forgotten came to his mind. He remembered his uncle had said to him one time: "If you give yourself to the spirits of the sea, my boy, the spirits of the earth will no longer want you." These strange words returned now to threaten him. "I was thinking too much of the sea, perhaps," he thought. "And now the earth does not want me any more and it is pushing me away, far down in these deep hollows where I will never be rescued. I am lost—really lost. I don't know which way my home lies and I am sure I will never find the way there again. Perhaps the earth is angry at my parents, too. Perhaps they are even dead."

As Clopinet stood there pondering, he heard a startling sound above. It was a multitude of tiny plaintive voices which seemed to be calling for help. They were not bird cries, but very sweet and child-like voices. Poor Clopinet was even more distressed than before.

"Here, here, little sprites," he cried, "come and weep with me, or take me away to weep with you. Then we can at least comfort one another in our grief. Now I am all alone."

The little voices went on calling for a half hour more without paying any attention to Clopinet. But at last the sweet, sad plaint grew fainter. Most of the voices seemed to be moving farther away. A few cries still reached Clopinet when those who were left behind called to the others to wait for them. Clopinet was filled with despair when he heard the spirits leaving. He did not want to be alone again. And so he cried out after them: "Spirits of the night, spirits of the sea, please take pity on me and carry me away."

Then he started to run very fast. Whether his desire to grow wings was so strong or whether it was a feverish dream, he felt he was leaving the earth and was actually flying off in the direction that the spirit travelers had taken. As he rose in the misty air, he thought he saw some small black arrows flying ahead of him. But soon he could see nothing but the mist and he called out in vain to the spirits to wait for him. The voices continued to cry mournfully, but they sounded farther and farther away as the spirits were lost in the clouds.

After awhile Clopinet felt his wings tire. He began to descend slowly, and did not stop until he reached the very foot of the dune. When he reached the ground, he tried to stretch out his arms again

as if he were flying. He thought that they would become wings again if he wished them to. He was so busy thinking of all these new experiences that he forgot to be frightened any more.

The night was cloudy, but there was light enough to distinguish objects not too far away. Clopinet was seated on some very fine soft sand. All around him were strange round light balls which he thought at first were apple trees in blossom. But when he looked more closely he saw that they were like the rocks he had seen on top of the dunes and he knew they were great stones that must have slid down to the beach.

It was a lovely beach because in that particular region the sea came up to the foot of the dune every day and swept away the mud that fell from the marly hill. The sand was washed into a thousand places by small streams of water. The tide had not yet risen. Clopinet could hear the swishing of the approaching waves. Suddenly he saw a multitude of black heaps, large and rounded, lying on the pale stretch of wet sand that would soon be covered with water. He was not afraid. He looked at the silent shapes in astonishment. They were like the heads of enormous beasts that might have been sleeping. Clopinet wanted to see them more closely; so he

crept forward until he could touch one of them. He found it was a rock resembling those on the shore. But why was it black when the others had been white? He touched it and picked up something like a huge cluster of grapes. Perhaps it was grapes. Clopinet was very hungry. He bit into it, but his teeth found nothing but a hard shell. He kept on biting, and at last he struck something soft. It was a mussel! He opened more of them with his penknife and satisfied his hunger. It was the thick covering of mussel shells that had made the rocks look black.

When Clopinet had eaten his fill, he felt better. He no longer thought of his strange wings. Instead he decided that he must have rolled gently down the dune and only imagined that he had been flying in the clouds.

He climbed one of the larger black rocks to see what lay further on. Again he saw the pale flashes that he had noticed from the hilltop. What could they be? He remembered his uncle telling him that the water of the sea often shone like a white fire during the night. Clopinet decided that what he saw must be the sea. It seemed to be quite near. It came toward the rocks in so slow and steady a way that the child did not notice how much ground

it was gaining. He remained quite still upon his rock, watching the water come and go, advance and retreat, ruffle up into large waves, rise only to fall down again until it rolled up on the beach with a whispering sound that filled him with drowsiness.

Clopinet could not resist. It was about ten o'clock in the evening and he had never been up so late before. His bed of rocks and shells was not very soft, but he was so tired that he could have slept anywhere. For a few moments he fixed his heavy eyes on the thin silvery sheet which extended along the sand. He saw it move forward as the waves returned. Nothing is less frightening than this calm and treacherous invasion of the rising sea.

Clopinet noticed that the strip of sand in front of him was growing smaller and that waves were beginning to wash against the foot of his rock. The fine white foam was so beautiful that he did not shrink back. It was the sea at last! He was looking at it and could touch it. It was not so great after all, he thought, because he saw nothing beyond the row of waves near shore. Beyond was a black band lost in the mist. There was nothing to frighten him in its appearance. The sea must have known that Clopinet had always wanted to live with it! The sea must know everything. Clopinet had heard

his uncle speak of it as if it were a great and righteous person. Then the little boy remembered that he had not yet spoken to it. He must be polite. Heavy with sleep, he tipped his woolen cap politely toward the shining waters. His head fell on his arm. He was fast asleep.

Uncle Laquille took Clopinet to many ship owners

Chapter III THE GROTTO

AT THE end of two hours Clopinet was awakened by a queer noise. The sea was beating against the rock where Clopinet sat. It beat with such force that the rock seemed to tremble. All the other rocks were hidden. Clopinet saw, instead, a great mass of foam all around him. It was high tide and the poor child did not know what was happening. He looked back toward the place where he had come from but all that he could see was water. The water seemed to be rising even higher. Clopinet put his legs down into the waves to see how deep it was. He could not touch the bottom. He was afraid to let go of the rock for fear the water would carry him away. He thought that he was lost forever

and he closed his eyes so that he need not look at the wild sea.

Suddenly he heard above him the little voices that had called out to him on the sand hill and his courage returned. He had flown once before in order to descend from the great heights. He could fly back again. He mimicked the cry of the invisible spirits and he heard them hovering about him as if they were waiting for him. He stretched out his arms like wings once more, and rose into the air. He was not flying very high. He seemed to be barely skirting the sea as he left the big rock, nearly touching the waves as he flew. Sometimes he rested upon the rocks near the surface. At other times he found himself swimming. The water seemed warm. He stayed up without effort as if he had been swimming all his life. He wondered how it looked below. Closing his wings, he dived head first into the leaping mass of white flames which did not burn him. At last he was tired and returned to his rock. Here he fell asleep, lulled by the swishing sound of the surf and by the sweet voices of the sprites which called to him from the heavens above.

When he awoke, the sun was rising through a silver mist. A fresh wind ruffled the green sea and the mist gradually faded. Toward the east there

were billowy clouds of rose and lavender. The rock on which Clopinet had slept was high enough for him to see how vast the sea was. It was not as calm as the day before, but once more the waters were at low tide so they were further away from Clopinet. He wanted to see the waves up close again. He ran along the sand caring little when he splashed himself in the large pools that the tide had left behind. He was happiest when he was wading up to his knees. He picked up a cluster of shells which delighted him. When he returned to the foot of the dune, he drank at the tiny springlets. The water was somewhat salty but less bitter than the sea water he had tasted. He was so happy to be near the sea that he forgot all about returning home. Back and forth along the shore he ran, looking at everything around him. He tried to understand it all. He saw some boats passing in the distance and imagined what sailing was like. He even saw a great vessel far out on the horizon. At first he thought that it was a church, but when it came nearer he could see that it moved like a boat. His heart was in his mouth! Before him was a steamship—one of those floating palaces his uncle had described. Clopinet would have liked to be on board. He would have liked to explore the end

of the sea where it was separated from the sky by a gray line.

Clopinet had forgotten the tailor when suddenly fear of him returned. Far down the beach the boy saw a figure walking. But it turned out to be a perfectly normal human being, instead of the little hunchback. It was Clopinet's oldest brother, François. The day before François had shaken his fist at the tailor, for he loved Clopinet dearly and hated to have him taken away. Clopinet ran to François as fast as he could and threw himself into his brother's arms. "Where did you come from?" cried François in astonishment. "It is only seven o'clock in the morning. Surely you have not walked from Dives. Where did you stay last night?"

"There on that black rock," said Clopinet.

"What! On the Big Cow?"

"It's not a cow, François, it's really and truly a rock."

"Oh, of course, I know that. But these rocks are called the Black Cows. Where were you during the tide?"

"I don't know what you mean by the tide," said Clopinet shyly.

"When the sea rises—why it comes all the way up to the Black Cows."

"Oh, yes. I saw the sea rise, but the sea spirits saved me from drowning."

"What nonsense, Clopinet. There are no spirits of the sea. . . . perhaps there are some earth spirits though. I would not swear to it."

"Whether they belong to the earth or the sea," replied Clopinet, "they carried me to safety."

"Did you see them?"

"No, but I heard them. Later I fell fast asleep on the rock in the very midst of the water."

"Well, all I can say is that you took a pretty big chance! The Big Cow is the only rock that the tide does not completely cover when the sea is quiet. But, if the slightest gust of wind comes up, the water rises higher. That would have been the end of you, my poor little one."

"Pshaw! I know how to swim and dive and fly over the waves. It is great fun," said Clopinet.

"Go on, now you are talking nonsense. Your clothes are wet, too. I'll wager you've been scared and hungry and cold. Eat the bread that I have brought and take a good gulp of my cider in the leather flask. And then tell me quietly how you got away from that dog of a tailor."

Clopinet told everything that had happened.

"Fine," said François. "I am so glad that he did

not have time to make you suffer. He is a dreadful man. He even brags about the death of his apprentices. He mistreats them and deprives them of the proper nourishment. Our father would not believe what I told him and he has convinced mama that I have a grudge against the creature and have not told the truth. You know how much she believes father. She cried all day yesterday and would not eat her supper, but this morning she listened to him again and he convinced her that you were already accustomed to your new master. If you go home now, father will only scold you and take you to Dives himself, this very evening. The tailor will be there for two days. Mama won't be able to defend you. She will just sit and cry. If you take my advice, go and find Uncle Laquille. He lives in Trouville. Tell him to let you enlist as a cabin boy in the navy. That ought to make you happy."

"But they won't take me in the navy," cried Clopinet in bewilderment. "Papa said that a lame person is not a man and is not fit to be a sailor."

"You are not so very lame if you could run about all night without shoes in this terrible place. Didn't you get sick at all?" said François.

"No," answered Clopinet, "only my right leg is more tired than my left."

"That is nothing. You don't have to say a word about it. Think now—what do you want to do? If father were here he would make me take you right back to the tailor. I wouldn't do it with very much joy because I know what awaits you there. But say the word and I will take you to Trouville. It is not very far from here and I could get home by evening."

"Yes, let's go to Trouville," said Clopinet. "Dear François, you have saved my life. And if mama is no longer ill with grief and as long as father is not worried at all, I might as well go to sea, which is what I have always wanted to do."

They arrived at Trouville in about three hours. It was a little fishing village. Uncle Laquille lived in a house on the beach with his wife and seven children. He received Clopinet gladly and approved quite heartily of his little nephew. He could well understand why Clopinet did not want to become a tailor and when he heard all that had happened on the Big Cow, he swore that Clopinet was destined for far greater adventures. He promised to make inquiry the next day for a position in the merchant marine or the navy.

"You may go home to your parents," he said to François. "And since I know that your father is

very bullheaded, you will do well to let him think that Clopinet is with the hunchback. I know that crab of a tailor is a bad rascal. He is cruel to the weak. I would be humiliated to have a nephew of mine apprenticed to such a bad person. Go on home, François, and rest assured that I will take care of everything. Here is a boy who will bring honor to his family. Let them think that he is at Dives. It will be three or four months before Tire-à-gauche gets around to your house again. When your father finds out that the lad ran away from the tailor, it will be time enough to tell him that Clopinet is at sea and receives his blows only from noble hands. It is a different matter receiving blows from the hands of seamen. But it is the vilest of all infamies to be thrashed by a hunchback!"

François and Clopinet both agreed. François returned home. Before leaving, he gave his little brother a package of clothes that Mother Doucette had made, some new shoes and a little money to which he added three shiny francs from his own pocket. Then he kissed Clopinet on both cheeks and advised him to take good care of himself.

Uncle Laquille was a fine man. He had suffered and endured much, but he had also seen many great and beautiful things on his travels. Clopinet listened

eagerly to him and asked him many questions. Madame Laquille came home at dinner time and Clopinet was introduced to her. She was tall and thin, dressed in a dirty petticoat and a cotton cap in the style of the province. She had more of a beard on her chin than her husband and she did not seem inclined to obey him. She did not welcome Clopinet very heartily and after a few moments Laquille was obliged to tell the boy that he must not stay very long.

The following day Laquille did as he had promised. He took Clopinet to many ship owners. But when they saw the lad limp, they all refused to take him. He was given the same treatment when he went to the men in charge of recruits for the navy. Poor Clopinet returned to his uncle's house very downhearted, and the disappointed Laquille was forced to admit to his wife that they had failed. It was all because Clopinet had a weak leg and had been raised on shore. He did not have the bold air expected of a sailor.

"I am quite sure of that," replied Mme. Laquille. "He is not fit for anything—not even a lout of a farmer. You made a big mistake by taking care of him. You do nothing but foolish things when I am not here. We will have to take him to the tailor.

I have enough children as it is and I won't bother with a useless boy in the house."

"Be patient, my dear," said Laquille. "There is a good chance that someone will take him along on the cod-fishing expedition."

Mme. Laquille shrugged her shoulders. The village was teaming with healthy children, already trained in fishing. Nobody would want a child who was lame and knew nothing. Nevertheless Laquille insisted on trying again early the next morning. But alas, to no avail. Everybody had more children than work on his hands. Madame Laquille howled that she had enough to attend to her own batch without feeding another. Laquille begged her to be patient for a few days longer. He took Clopinet out fishing. This was thrilling for the child. He forgot all his worries when he felt himself tossed about on the great body of water that he loved so dearly.

"He is really a strong lad," said Laquille on their return. "He is not afraid of anything. He does not even get sea-sick. He has developed his sea legs already. If I could look after him I could do something for him."

His wife did not reply. When night fell and all the children had gone to sleep, Clopinet lay wide awake with anxiety. He heard the cotton-capped

woman say to her husband, "I am fed up with him. The tailor is going to pass by tomorrow morning on his way to Honfleur. I shall return his apprentice to him. He will know how to bring Clopinet to reason. There is nothing so good as a flogging."

Laquille hung his head. He sighed and did not answer. Clopinet realized that his fate was decided. His uncle was no more able to preserve him from the tailor than his mother had been. Determined to save himself, he waited until everybody was fast asleep and then rose very quietly. He put on his clothes and took his pack. Making sure that his money was in his pocket, he prepared to leave his bed. It was a joke of a bed. Since all the Laquille children had to sleep in the two beds, Laquille had placed a bundle of sea-weed for Clopinet in a loft that had a skylight and a ladder reaching up to it. Clopinet stretched his leg out in the dark to find the rung of the ladder. But he did not feel anything. Then he remembered that Mme. Laquille had taken it away in order to climb up to her garret which was exactly opposite the loft at the other end of the room. Clopinet lifted the rag which served as a curtain. It was a clear night outside. He knew that the ladder was out of his reach and that it was impossible to jump without breaking his neck.

Strange that he did not think of his wings now! But his brother had ridiculed the idea, and Clopinet thought to himself that he had probably dreamed of them. Nevertheless he had to leave the house and he could not wait until daylight. Opening the window, he made sure that he could climb through it. The sea was still far away. He had noticed the night before that the tide had come beating all the way up to the stakes which held up the house. When would it return? He had been told it came every twenty-three hours.

"If the sea comes to look for me," he said to himself, "I will jump right in. I am not at all afraid of it . . . it has been so nice to me."

For a long time he sat there musing, holding his pack closely. Sometimes he fell asleep in spite of himself. He dreamed that he was on his uncle's boat. He awoke suddenly. Outside the wind blew and Clopinet could hear the child-like voices of the tiny spirits of the night. This time he understood their song. "Come, come," they said, "to the sea—the sea—the sea! Up, up, do not fall asleep again! Open your wings and come with us to the sea!"

Clopinet felt his heart beat loudly. His wings opened. He jumped from the window and landed on an old mast which was tied to the house for a

pigeon perch. Then he let himself slide. He imagined that he was flying. He found himself in his uncle's boat.

It was anchored fast with a chain and padlock. There was not a chance of making use of it. The water was not very deep and Clopinet reached a stretch of sand without getting his clothes wet. But the shore was covered with very dry sea weed which made walking difficult. Moreover it was midnight and Clopinet had stayed awake far beyond his endurance. He lay down on the fine warm sand and fell fast asleep.

He did not waken until sunrise. But his happiness was quickly lost when he saw where he was. He had wanted to go in the direction of Honfleur where he had seen a lighthouse. But he had made a mistake. He had come back to the spot where he had met his brother François. It was upon this road that the tailor had to travel to Dives. Clopinet was once more in danger of meeting the hunchback. To return to Trouville was impossible. If they saw him, they would deliver him over to the enemy.

He decided to continue in the direction of the dunes, keeping away from the road. Clopinet's uncle had told him that the tailor was afraid of the sea and had never been able to put his foot in a

He jumped from the window and landed on an old mast which was tied to the house

boat without becoming ill. The sight of the waves struck terror to the hunchback and wherever he journeyed he kept away from the coast.

Clopinet passed through a tiny village where he bought a large loaf of bread and then went his way along the dunes as far as the Black Cows. There he found himself once more alone on his desert.

He no longer wished to go home. What his brother had told him had warned him that he would not receive any sympathy from his father nor any protection from Mama Doucette. He ate his bread and gazed about him. The few days he had spent with his uncle had given him some idea of the locality. The day was bright. He saw that the mouth of the Seine river was far away and that to reach Honfleur he would have to cross the bare lowlands. The dunes at this spot were the only ones in the neighborhood where he could hide and find shelter by himself. The poor child was afraid of most people in the world, and Madame Laquille had made him more distrustful than ever. He did not mind loneliness, however, and since he had met the wonderful spirits, the wild countryside seemed very different to him.

Thinking over all these things, Clopinet resolved to climb over the dunes and to settle there forever.

He was only a child and he did not think of the things that an older person would have considered. He did not stop to wonder where his food was to come from. There was the sea and its inexhaustible supply of shells. One would soon tire of eating such fare, but Clopinet did not realize it. All he could think of was the tailor and his mind was occupied with ways to avoid the hunchback.

Close to the Black Cows the dunes rose in a great jagged formation, three hundred feet high. They were very beautiful with somber walls streaked red and gray and olive. They looked like solid rock. It was on these heights that Clopinet would have liked to hide, but it did not seem possible to climb up to them. His brother had warned him against sleeping on the Black Cows, and Clopinet had promised never to risk her life there again. Toward daylight he began to climb up the sides of the dune and found them less frightening and difficult than they had looked in the night. Before long he had learned to recognize the solid spots and to find the places that were safe from landslides. These were the slopes where plants grew, holding down the slippery sand.

After wandering about for a long time, he reached a rocky formation and saw before him a small grotto,

partly walled up. It was just like a little house, hollowed out of the hill. There was a stone bench and a blackened spot where a fire had once been kindled. It was a long time since it had been inhabited because the soft fine turf near the entrance bore no marks of fresh trampling. There were even large brambles hanging down over the opening which no one had taken the pains to cut for many days or weeks, perhaps.

Clopinet took possession of the grotto, abandoned by the one who had lived there before him. He put down his pack and cut some dry herbs to make a bed on the stone bench.

"Now they won't find me," he thought happily, "neither the tailor nor my Aunt Laquille. Everything is lovely here. If I only had one of our cows to keep me company, I am sure I would never get tired of it."

It was surprising that he should miss the cows that he had never cared about before.

He was lonely and so he lay down to sleep. All day he slept soundly and by night he was wide awake again. The darkness reassured him and he ventured forth from his hiding place. He found a place that he called his garden because many flowers grew there. It was, to be sure, a strange garden compared

to those that he had been accustomed to. It was a strip of green between two slopes that rose straight upward. Only a bit of the sky could be seen between the two high peaks. The ravine formed a natural road which Clopinet followed. He came to a walled place that had been built by the hands of men. Through a gap in the wall he saw the sea a hundred feet below. The moon rose from behind the heavy dark clouds and shone on the waters. Clopinet was happy to have the sea so near. He could hear the voice of the waves and he knew that the sound would lull him to sleep at night. Clopinet peered down at the outside wall of the cliff. It seemed to be as solid as rock and extended straight and steep into the water so that no man could climb it. Whoever had lived in the grotto before must have been hiding, too, thought Clopinet, for the hole in the wall was a watch tower looking over the wild dunes.

Clopinet wanted to see where the other end of the twisting ravine went; so he retraced his steps to the place he had started from. But a deep crevice soon stopped him. The moon was half hidden by the clouds and he could not see where he was in the dim light. He carefully groped his way back to the grotto. He would wait until day to explore his wild garden.

He was not sleepy. He was tired of doing nothing and felt very lonely. He hoped that the little spirits would come back to keep him company. The deep rumbling of a rising storm drowned out the sound of the sea. Clopinet fell asleep.

He had never dreamt when he was at home. This night he dreamed a great deal. He pictured himself lost in the dunes. Then suddenly he seemed to be at home again and he heard his father's voice counting money, saying over and over . . . eighteen . . . . eighteen . . . eighteen. It was eighteen francs that the tailor had been promised for Clopinet's first year of apprenticeship. Clopinet thought that he felt the terrible hand of the tailor. He let out a great cry and woke up. Where was he? It was pitch black in the grotto. He remembered where he was at last. But almost at once he was plunged into confusion again, for he heard once more the sound of a voice saying distinctly, "eighteen, eighteen, eighteen!"

Clopinet felt a cold sweat break out all over him. It was not the strong clear voice of his father that he heard. It was a thin quavery voice that sounded very much like the tailor himself. He must have come. He must have discovered Clopinet's hiding place! The frightened child got up from his bed

of rocks. Something whirled noisily in front of him and left the grotto repeating in a shrill voice, "eighteen . . . eighteen . . . eighteen."

The tailor must have come to the grotto to hide from the storm, thought Clopinet. And when he spied a figure lying on the bench, he must have been frightened away. The idea that the tailor was a coward filled Clopinet with courage. He lay down again with his stick by his side and resolved to fight if the enemy returned.

After he had slept a long time, he awoke once more. The storm had subsided and the moon glowed on the turf at the entrance to the grotto. Rain had fallen and the leaves which hung down over the opening of the grotto twinkled with diamond drops. Clopinet was astonished to hear in the quiet night the sound of many animals—the roar of a bull, the bleating of goats, and the barking of dogs a short distance away. He listened closely. He could have sworn that he was at his own home listening to his father's flocks. But here he was in a grotto on a desert dune. How could a dwelling be so near him?

He could hear from time to time the strange sound that seemed to say "eighteen." The sound came from every side like a band of tailors scattered over

the dunes to mock him. Clopinet could not fall asleep again. He waited silently for the day to come. At dawn he crept softly out of the grotto and looked about him. He saw no one. There were only some queer birds which had slept on the heights of the dunes. When Clopinet approached them they flew into the air. He saw plovers of emerald plumage, cutting a thousand graceful capers in the sky, and godwits from the marshes, and a large bittern which flew along with its claws extended and its neck coiled upon its back. Clopinet did not know these birds by name. He had never seen them near his father's house because there were no streams or ponds near the farm. Birds of passage only swooped to earth when they wished to drink or refresh themselves with a bath.

Clopinet loved watching the birds, but they did not answer the strange question of the noises he had heard. He decided to look around to see if there was a farm near-by.

He found his way easily in the daylight, up a narrow thorny way to a high place where he could see all the surrounding country. But in every direction that he looked, he saw only vast stretches of sand. There was not the least trace of farmland or of a dwelling.

The sounds of the bull and the dogs and the sheep could not have been real. Clopinet thought that they must be demons of the night trying to frighten him. Had not his brother François said: "There are no spirits of the sea—but as for the earth, I could not swear to that." Clopinet had heard his father and mother tell about goblins of all kinds—good ones that were helpful and bad ones that made the barnyard animals fall ill. Clopinet was anxious. There must be goblins of the earth here in the dune-lands. Perhaps they did not want a boy to live among them. Perhaps they were trying to frighten him away!

If this were so, Clopinet decided he would not budge an inch from the grotto. Let the goblins come to him. He would not go in search of them. If he followed the strange animal calls he might get lost and never find his way back. Let them come, thought Clopinet, and I will thrash them thoroughly. He remembered what his uncle had said to him: "Some day, you will sprout wings of courage!"

When the fire was burning well, he put the bird on

Chapter IV THE SEARCH FOR FOOD

CLOPINET began to explore his surroundings. There was plenty of drinking water to be found in the little streams that flowed in all directions. He noticed that the higher he climbed the sweeter the water tasted. There was an earthy flavor about it, however, which was not altogether agreeable. At last he discovered a small stream flowing from a great rock. It had the odor of wild thyme. This sweet water fell drop by drop as if it were being coaxed out. Clopinet needed some sort of receptacle to catch the falling drops. He had noticed some large oyster shells in the marl that the sea had brought in. Searching carefully, he found among the broken ones a few that were large and whole.

He put them under the dripping water so that they would fill up like cups. When the first was brimming over, he put another in its place and took it into the garden for his breakfast. He had only the pieces of dry bread that he had brought with him, but he was not used to sweetmeats and could well do without them.

He did not find the day long. It was fine weather and he enjoyed looking at the plants growing in the turf that were quite different from those that grew on the plain. There were disagreeable ones bristling with thorns and darts. But he forgave them, for they were like guards defending him from outsiders. There were others that he liked very much, which he was careful not to trample on.

All day, through the gap in the old piece of wall which he called his window, Clopinet watched the sea to his heart's content. It was more beautiful than he had ever dreamed it could be. He saw many ships pass by in the distance. Not one of them approached the Black Cows, for it was a dangerous place. Clopinet knew that most of the ships were going out for mussels. His uncle had told him that when the fishermen were at sea, the shores were nearly deserted. So Clopinet went down to the beach to pick up some shell-fish for his supper.

He looked out of his window first to see if there were anyone in sight. When he reached the shore, he looked up to see if his window could be seen from below. There was no sign of it. It was too high up and too well-hidden by vines. When night came, Clopinet slept peacefully. He had explored every nook of his desert and was tired out from climbing. He did not even have to be lulled to sleep. And if the goblins amused themselves by calling to him, he did not hear them.

The third day Clopinet explored the base of the dune. He was in search of a good hiding place there in case anyone surprised him on the beach. He found at least ten suitable ones and after that felt as free as a little wild animal who knows there are safe burrows near. He decided to gather enough shell-fish for his breakfast and dinner, too, so that he would not have to go down to the sea before every meal.

On the shore there were many reeds growing, midget willows and flexible shrubs. Clopinet gathered them and took them to his grotto home. There he made a large solid basket by weaving the reeds together. He also made himself an excellent bed of seaweed.

After a while Clopinet decided to try his luck at

hunting. He sat near the beach with a heap of stones in front of him. He was skillful at throwing, for he had often practiced when he was tending the cattle by himself. After he had watched for a long time, a sea-partridge ran along the sand. Clopinet aimed his throw well, and the bird fell down. It was a plump fellow, and Clopinet began to prepare it for his dinner. Making a fire was an easy task for he had a tinderbox in his pack. No one ever traveled without a tinderbox, Clopinet had heard his brothers say. It consisted of an iron ring and a piece of tinder. Anyone could have a fire by striking it with a pebble. Clopinet made a heap of leaves and dry brushwood. When the fire was burning well, he put his bird on to cook. Perhaps Clopinet did not like the smoky taste very well, but he pretended that it was a real feast, and he was only sorry that he could not offer a wing to his mother or a leg to his brother François. The sea partridge is not a real partridge. It belongs to the sea gull family and is about the size of a blackbird.

While he was hunting game, Clopinet saw many other birds which tempted him. He did not know them by name. When evening came, they all flew down to the beach where they called to one another noisily. Among them were three that were

larger than the others. At sundown they left the shore and swam out over the waters as if they were in the habit of sleeping out at sea. Some returned to land and hid in the crevices of the dune; others continued their flight, soaring far up in the sky. Clopinet saw that some of the birds spent all day in the sky, darting in and out of the white clouds that hovered above him. In the evening they came down for their supper on the beach. There was one very large one which perched on a summit of the dune. From there it would cut a graceful swirl in the air and descend to its favorite fishing spot. Once Clopinet saw twenty birds fly down from the same place and he decided that they must be nesting there.

Clopinet spent most of his time in his watchtower making observations. He watched the birds at close range without being detected. Soon he learned something that amused him very much. The sea swallows that flew in circles above him would often drop something from their beaks. It looked like a small shell or fish. When they did this, they called shrilly as if in warning. Clopinet looking down from his window, finally found out who this cry was meant for. Something moved down on the beach and he saw that it was the little ones

coming out to pick up the food that their mothers dropped down for them. Clopinet ran down to see what the baby swallows were like. But when the mother birds saw him, they set up another warning cry, and the little ones scattered into the bushes. Clopinet found them under the weeds, crouched low and motionless. He did not take them away, because he did not want to grieve the mother birds.

After watching the birds fish, he learned to fish himself. There were nothing but shell-fish on the banks, but when the tide withdrew there was always an abundance of pretty and appetizing fish left on the sand. The problem was to be there in time to gather them up before the water carried them away again. Clopinet saw that the birds were cunning and agile fishers. He tried to follow their example but the sea was quicker than he was. Clopinet saw very clearly that he could not glide over the waves as the birds did. He only had wings in moments of great danger. He knew that he must learn to swim. Because he trusted the sea this was not hard for him. He swam one day without knowing himself how he had accomplished it. Perhaps all men could swim naturally like the birds and the animals if they did not fear the water.

But the birds could swim longer than Clopinet

without tiring and they could see objects at greater distances across the water. The boy came a long way from catching as many fish as they did. He gave up the contest with those swift divers and began to watch the birds that did not dive at all. Instead, they stood on the beach and dug in the wet sand with their long beaks. Clopinet made a little shovel and followed their example. He discovered some sand-eels. A sand-eel is an excellent fish for eating; so Clopinet cooked some for supper. If he had only some bread, he would have dined like a king. But his ration was at an end, and he did not dare to venture forth to the town of Villers to buy more bread.

He resolved to do without it as long as he could. One morning he decided to look for eggs. It was nesting time. Clopinet did not know that most sea-birds do not lay their eggs in nests but choose open places on the sand and rocks. But he soon found this out by accident. The eggs were in places that he had not thought of looking, but they were so small that they were not worth taking. He decided that the large birds which lay big eggs probably nested high on the cliff. It did not seem possible to climb up there, for the slope was so steep that it would make any climber dizzy.

Every day that passed made Clopinet more courageous. He learned to become cautious and to find out where danger was rather than to flee from it blindly. He studied the shape of the cliff very carefully and he climbed up nearly as far as its summit without accident. He was well rewarded for his trouble, for in the gap of a jagged rock he found four lovely green eggs. He put them in the basket which he had lined with seaweed. There were some beautiful feathers on the ground as well, and he took three of them and put them in his hat. They were long and slender and white as snow. They looked as if they had come from the crown or the tail of the same bird. The eggs were still warm, and Clopinet imagined that the mother bird came to lay during the night. First he thought that he would lie in wait for her and take her by surprise. But then he decided that if he did this he might frighten all the other birds away. He did not want to run the risk of having them abandon his encampment.

A week had gone by and Clopinet had not seen anyone on the shore or the dunes. He had been so occupied in exploring that he had not had time to be bored. But when he was well installed in his home and little by little had become assured of a

supply of food, the days began to drag. He already had a slight knowledge of the birds about him, but he wanted to learn their names, the lands they had come from, and the reason for some of the things he had observed about them. In other words, he longed to chat with someone.

The weather was beautiful. The base of the dunes dried quickly in the warm May sunshine when the tide was out. One day Clopinet saw some passers-by appear and his heart beat with the desire to go up and speak to them if only to say: "Aren't we having nice weather?" But he did not dare, for if one of them should ask him who he was and what he was doing there, what could he answer? He knew that men of the village disapproved of vagabonds and sometimes even locked them up in a prison. Clopinet was too honest to tell a false tale about himself. He preferred to stay in hiding instead.

One morning the east wind carried to him a ringing of bells, and he knew it was Sunday. By force of habit he put on his Sunday clothes and stuck the three white feathers in his hat. He put on his shoes and washed and combed until he was spick and span. Then he set out. He did not know exactly where he was going. He usually went to church on Sunday. It was the day to meet and chat

with the young boys of the parish. They played nine-pins together and sometimes they danced. The ringing church bell was a call to village life.

The tailor must be far away now, safe at Honfleur. Clopinet cut across the desert as straight a path as the crow flies and soon found himself a few paces from Villers. Since he knew no one and no one knew him, he hoped to wander about unrecognized. He longed to see human beings again and to hear the sound of human voices without attracting any attention. He had succeeded in doing this the last time he had passed through the little village. But this time to his amazement, he found that everyone was watching him and even turning around to follow him with their eyes.

Why should he be afraid after climbing the dune?

Chapter V THE WONDERFUL FEATHERS

CLOPINET was uneasy and thought of turning back, but at the sight of the bakery his desire for bread was so great that he stopped at the door and asked for some.

"How many loaves?" said the baker, looking him over with an air of surprise.

"Could you give me a big loaf?" said Clopinet, hoping that he could get one that would last for several days.

"Certainly," replied the baker, "and even two or three if you have the strength to carry them."

"All right, give me three," said Clopinet. "I can carry them."

"Are there others to feed at your house?"

"Well, it looks that way," said Clopinet, who did not want to tell any lies.

"Oh, ho! You're a proud one, are you? You don't like to talk. You don't want to say who you are and where you live. But you are not from this district for I don't know you."

"No, I am not from around here," Clopinet replied. "I have no time to chat. Please give me the three loaves and tell me how much I owe you."

"Yes, indeed! Out with the money, for bread is quite expensive here. But if you will give me the three feather that you have in your hat, you can return every Sunday for a month and I will give you three loaves of bread each time without asking for any money. You see how fair-minded I am? You should be well satisfied."

At first Clopinet thought that the baker was poking fun at him, but when the man insisted, he decided that the three feathers must be very rare. Perhaps that was why everyone was looking at him. He took them out of his hat at once. The baker held out his hand ready to take them, but Clopinet, who had plenty of money, refused to give up the pretty plumes. He decided he would rather give up a few crowns than the feathers that he had had to climb so high up the cliff to find.

"No, thank you. Here is your money for the three loaves. I would rather keep my three plumes."

"Would you like bread twice a week instead of once?" said the baker.

"No, thank you, I prefer to pay."

"Would you like four loaves a week for two months?"

"I tell you no," said Clopinet. "I prefer my feathers."

The baker gave him the three loaves. Clopinet handed him the money and departed. But in order to reach the road leading to the desert, he had to turn down a certain street which brought him to the back entrance of the bakery shop. He heard the baker's voice speaking.

"No! Not for forty-eight loaves of bread would he hand over those plumes."

Clopinet stood quietly under the window. He heard a woman's voice say.

"Were they really the feathers of the night heron?"

"None other and the most beautiful I have ever seen!"

"Oh, bother," said the woman. "They are becoming very rare. The night herons don't nest on the beach any more. Their feathers bring twenty

francs apiece now. You would have made sixty francs. It would really be worth your while to run after the lad and offer him three francs for each one. He would probably take the money."

Clopinet did not want the money. He doubled his pace and while the baker was looking for him in one direction, he escaped in the other and fled back to the dunes.

This adventure made him think. Why were the night herons so valuable? How could bird feathers possibly be worth twenty gold francs apiece?

"I would have thought they were only fit to decorate my hat," Clopinet pondered, "and lo and behold, if I had asked the baker to feed me for a year, he probably would have consented in order to have my three plumes!"

But as he had not gone hungry yet, Clopinet was not interested in the baker's bargain. He understood very well how marvelous it was to possess something rare. While he was thinking these things and walking along the dune road, he suddenly heard a sharp voice behind him: "You say that he took this way. I'll catch him all right, and if he does not want to sell those plumes, I will snatch them from him. Then we will get them for nothing. That is the best way to do business after all."

The voice was still some distance away but so piercing that it could easily be heard. It was one of those voices that is not easily forgotten. Clopinet recognized it instantly. The tailor! Immediately his wings of fear carried him off the road and into the shrubbery. But when he found where he was, he was ashamed of himself for being so cowardly. Why should he be afraid of a hunchback when he had climbed to the top of the largest dune and had swam in the sea. Two things, certainly, that Tire-à-gauche would never have dared to try.

"I must be brave," thought Clopinet, "and not afraid of other men. If I am, I will always be unhappy. I won't be able to go the places that I want to. I am just as big and just as strong as that little tailor. Uncle Laquille said that he only bullied those that were afraid of him. I'll finish with him. One, two, three—go! And may the good spirits of the sea protect me!"

Clopinet proudly placed his three plumes in his hat. Putting his loaves of bread down on the grass, he took hold of his staff which was heavy and shod at the end and ran toward the tailor. But when he saw him face to face his heart failed him. He stopped short, almost ready to run away again. But suddenly he lifted his arms high. Telling himself that they

were wings of courage, he pointed his stick toward the tailor. The little man stopped and took two steps backward.

"Well, well," he said, grinning as if he were pleased at the sight of Clopinet. "If it isn't my little apprentice. Stop! Clopinet, my dear boy, look who I am? I am your friend and wish you no evil."

"Is that so," replied Clopinet. "You want to take my three plumes. I know."

"Who has been telling you such nonsense," said the tailor, appearing greatly surprised.

"It must have been the spirits," Clopinet replied, standing in a position to defend his treasure and his liberty. As soon as he had said these words, he saw Tire-à-gauche turn pale and begin to tremble, for the hunchback believed in spirits.

"Come," the tailor stammered, "y-you are a naughty child. Tell me where the night herons lodge and I won't ask you another thing."

"They lodge," said Clopinet, "in a place where the birds and the spirits alone can rise. I warn you that if you try to take me, I will carry you as a night heron carries a crab, and I will make you roll down to the bottom of the sea."

Clopinet spoke hotly for his pride was aroused. The tailor, believing that the boy had joined the

"You want to take my three plumes," said Clopinet to the hunchback, "I know"

ranks of the goblins, turned around and muttering to himself took to the Villers' road at top speed. Clopinet, marveling over his victory, picked up his loaves and ran swiftly back to the grotto.

High up there he began to talk to himself, for he just had to speak. "It is ended now," he said. "I will never be afraid of anything again, and no one will ever take me where I do not want to go. I am free at last. The spirit of the sea has given me courage, and I must never lose what it has given me. And now I shall look for some more plumes. I wonder why the aigrette of the night heron is so rare. Ah—but I shall gather a lot and sell them some day. Then I can say to my father, 'I don't have to be a tailor. Even if I am lame, I can earn more money in a year than any of my brothers!' "

How nice it was to be alone! Clopinet was so glad to have bread again that he did nothing but feast the whole day. Now that he knew that he could go to town and buy things without fear, he need not worry about starving.

On Monday he did a perilous and difficult thing. He did not wait until day to climb up to the peak of the jagged cliff. He made his way so nimbly and quietly that he did not awaken a single bird. Then he found a good hiding place and lay down to watch.

From his lookout he could see all about him. It was the first time he had a good view of the place. There was part of an old ruin standing on the peak. It made an excellent place of refuge for the birds. The night herons who had been hunted in the woods and ponds of the countryside because of their precious plumage had sought safety here. A little marsh near-by had brought many other water birds to the side of the cliff. Clopinet looked closely at the old ruin and decided that it had once been an observation tower. His uncle had told him that there were many lookouts along the Norman coast. This lookout explained the grotto and the observatory tower down below. It had undoubtedly been a refuge, probably for sailors who found shelter there from the storms.

Clopinet had brought back many new ideas from his short trip to Villers. He knew the secret of the dwelling-place of the night herons! Something that the villagers would all like to know. He looked closely at the nests of roughly woven branches lodged in the timber-work. He could see the females brooding quietly. Little by little the males arrived to rest after their night of hunting. Their flight was noiseless like most birds of the night. There did not seem to be any baby birds in any of the nests. The male

birds brought food to the females and after they had delivered their burden slept peacefully. Clopinet had thought that they were all white, but now he saw that they were only white about the neck and breast. Their wings were pearly gray, and a lovely somber green covered their backs. From their crown the long fine aigrette composed of three plumes waved gracefully. Only the males seemed to wear the fine feathers. Clopinet noticed that some of the birds were without the aigrette. It was molting time, and the feathers were falling. Many of the precious plumes were scattered by the wind over the rocky cliff. Clopinet made no effort to gather them because he wanted to observe the habits of the night-prowlers. Some of them were eating insects when suddenly they seemed to become aware of the presence of a stranger among them. A warning cry sounded, and they all turned their eyes in Clopinet's direction.

At first he was startled to see all those bright eyes turned toward him. About fifty of the group were males. They were as large as young turkey-cocks and had long beaks and pointed claws. If they had all attacked the curious onlooker at once, they could have done him a great deal of harm. But instead, they stared at Clopinet with an air of amazement.

Seeing that he did not move, they no longer bothered with him and began wrangling among themselves with a tremendous flapping of wings. They scratched and stretched and even yawned as if they were tired. At last each one sought a comfortable place and by sun-rise they were all asleep. Then Clopinet rose softly and gathered his collection of plumes without disturbing the birds. He stole softly away and this time he did not take any eggs with him because he did not want to frighten the night herons from the encampment.

He came back the next night before the males had returned from their nightly hunt. He scattered bread crumbs about, knowing how much the birds would enjoy the feast. He knew that all birds loved bread—perhaps the night herons would be grateful to him.

The next morning he saw that the crumbs had been eaten. He kept up his visits to the high perch and always brought bread with him. The birds became accustomed to seeing him. Some of them flew away at his approach, but at last the time came when they did not even stir when he came near. Some of the newly born who had never seen a man before were so tame that they flew to him and let him hold them on his lap and feed them

from his hand. Whenever he left them, they followed him to the very brink of the cliff.

He took such great pleasure in this pastime that he never found the days long any more. He began to love these wild birds as he had never loved the pigeons and barnyard fowls on the farm. He was proud to think that he had tamed the shy creatures. Soon he learned to love all the other birds on the cliff. He never attacked or frightened them. He scattered bread crumbs among them until he saw that they looked upon him as a friend. They did not fly away when he came near but perched on his shoulders and head. He was sorry that he had killed the sea partridge, and went off to buy cheese and meat so that he would not have to kill any more of his companions on the hill.

He did not want to buy his provisions at Villers where he might be recognized and tormented. He had noticed a hamlet somewhat nearer, situated in the opposite direction of Villers. There he found everything he wanted including well-preserved apples which he paid a large price for. He drank a mug of cider which was a great treat. He was very careful not to show his plumes and not to talk needlessly. There were two secrets he must protect—his name, so that no one would take him back

forcibly to his parents, and the location of the grotto, so that curious children would not wish to follow him. But he could listen to the villagers talk all he wished and he learned many things from them about the country. He saw that the young folk of the town knew the customs of the birds along the shore very well. They only spoke of two valuable birds—the night heron and the little grebes, a water bird which sometimes flew by but never perched near men. Clopinet asked some questions about the grebes and learned that the thick bright plumage on their backs was sold as an ornamental fur to the feather merchants who came to the town twice a year. Clopinet had already collected a dozen aigrettes. Now he knew what to do with them! He found out the day and the time that the dealers came so that he could do business with them. He was wise enough not to ask too many questions on the first visit so that the villagers would not wonder who he was and why he was interested in feathers.

His clothes were better than those Tire-à-gauche made

Chapter VI CLOPINET'S RETURN HOME

CLOPINET was surprised that the villagers had not looked for the night herons where he had found them. Then he heard a rumor which did not add to his peaceful state of mind. In the past, some one said, these birds had been found in the trees of the large cliff, but since a large piece of the cliff had fallen into the sea carrying with it all the vegetation which anchored the land, men feared to go there. One claimed that the weight of a single person would be enough to bring down the remainder. Clopinet went back to his grotto feeling very disheartened. He had climbed to the top of the cliff almost every day since he discovered it. His own grotto was nearly at the top. What if it

wasn't safe? What if that part of the cliff fell into the sea some night?

That night he was afraid. There was a swell, and the sound of the sea rumbled below. He awoke nearly every moment, thinking that the cliff was collapsing. He had investigated his section of it very thoroughly in order to be obsolutely sure that his hermitage was not built on a rock like the Black Cows, ready to fall down into the sea. Clopinet knew that the water that washed constantly against the coast gradually ate away the land. What if his grotto fell? Or what if the rocks of the cliff above him came down and buried him? He did not sleep at all, for his thoughts kept him awake. But something saved him. Fortunately he had in him a passion stronger than the fear of danger. It was to live a free life and to be master of his own fate.

He did not know what the word "nature" meant, but he became fascinated by the life in the wilds that men call nature. He was proud of resisting the temptation to return to the peace and safety of his father's farm. He clung to his grotto home. He saw that the birds nestled near him and he trusted their judgment and their instinct. If they built their homes on the cliff it must be safe.

All summer Clopinet stayed there, going for his

provisions to the different towns in the surrounding countryside, gradually getting acquainted with everything about him and learning more and more to live on sea creatures and wild fruits.

He succeeded in meeting the feather dealers while they were making the rounds without going into the village streets. And so he carried on his business with them without inquisitive bystanders near. He had enough business sense not to make unreasonable demands and so he was able to establish connections for the future. He was satisfied with a large six franc piece for each plume. He had already gathered fifty feathers. He had earned three hundred francs, an enormous sum for those days and more than a little country lad of his age had ever earned before.

When he found himself in possession of such a fortune, he decided to take it to his parents. But before he did this, he wanted to see his Uncle Laquille again. At the approach of winter he started for Trouville. Since he wanted to make a good impression on his family and as his clothes were damaged from constant climbing and exposure, he went first to Dives. There he had some clothes made—a new suit, some linen, and new shoes. He paid for everything with the money he had earned him-

self, and with plenty more money in his pocket he continued on his way to Trouville. He met his uncle returning from church in tears. He had just buried his wife. Even though she had treated him as badly as possible, the poor man mourned her deeply. He was astonished to see Clopinet again. For a moment he did not recognize his little lame nephew. Without knowing it, Clopinet had grown taller. He had the tanned skin which the sea air gives. By force of climbing and constant walking he had become stronger. His weak leg was as good as the other, and he no longer limped at all. His whole appearance had taken on a different air—a fiery glance, a penetrating and confident expression. His clothes were better than those that Tire-à-gauche had made him at his father's house. Laquille was struck by the change.

"Where have you come from?" he said. "Not from home?"

"No," said Clopinet, "but tell me quickly about my parents. I will tell you about myself later."

"I don't know anything about them," replied his uncle. "When you ran away from us during that night about—six months ago, I think——"

"Yes, uncle, I have counted the moons."

"Well, at first I looked for you everywhere I

could. But two weeks later the tailor passed by here again and said that he had seen you in good health near Villers and that he did not want to force you to follow him. He said that he thought that your family had taken you back and that you were on an errand for them at Villers. So naturally I thought you were safe at home and ceased worrying about you. Then my poor wife fell ill, and I have not left her to pay any visits; so I heard no word of your family. I am quite sure that they think you are at sea since your brother François told them that you were going. I am sure that you can go home without any danger of becoming apprenticed to the tailor. He swore that he would rather apprentice the devil than a lad as strange as you. I thought that you had shown your teeth to him and I did not blame you for it."

"I showed him my stick," said Clopinet. "You once told me, uncle, that I would sprout wings of courage—listen to my story and you will see that you were right."

Then Clopinet told his uncle the adventures that had befallen him and he showed him the great pile of money that the feathers of the blue heron had brought him.

"Well," cried Uncle Laquille. "Now that you

are rich, you can make of your life what you will. From the moment that you can prove that you are useful, no one will refuse to give you work on a vessel. You can sail away to far-off lands where other birds quite as rare and beautiful as your night herons abound. There are tropical birds, white aigrettes from America, birds of paradise, phoenixes which spring from their own dust, condors which abduct cattle, and hundreds of others which you have never heard of."

"It is true," said the boy. "There is so much that I have not heard of. There is so much that I really ought to know."

"You can learn everything by traveling."

These enthusiastic words from Uncle Laquille did not influence his nephew very much.

Laquille had toured the world without even learning to read, and Clopinet saw as he talked to the old man that he had many false notions about the simplest things. He believed that certain birds lived on air and never ate real food, that others were born of barnacles, the mollusks that attached themselves to ships. Clopinet had a romantic nature. He willingly believed in fairy birds. He would not have been surprised to hear a bird speak, but he had already observed too many of the laws of nature to

accept the mistakes and prejudices of old Uncle Laquille.

However, the idea of traveling was tempting. Often when he was lonely he had dreamed of taking long voyages. Laquille advised him to go to Honfleur and to take passage on some boat leaving for England. There were always vessels leaving. In England he could catch the grebes which nested everywhere. But when Clopinet learned that these birds had to be killed and skinned in order to get their plumage, he shook his head.

After supper when he rambled along the beach with his uncle, they returned to the subject of his leaving for England. Clopinet felt both troubled and bewildered at the sight of the large boats preparing to sail the next day for Honfleur. He had almost decided to arrange for a passage on one of the boats, when he heard the sound of the little childlike voices in the dark night, calling to him as they had called before in times of danger.

"There they are," he cried, "they have come to look for me."

His uncle, not knowing what he meant, stood open-mouthed with astonishment waiting for him to explain. But Clopinet did not explain. Instead he followed the invisible spirits with outstretched

arms. At first they took him to the beach—then out toward the pier. But suddenly they made a sharp turn and left the shore, leading him across the fields. Clopinet followed them as fast as he could but he could not catch up to them. He returned to his uncle out of breath.

"Look here, my child," said the kind old man, "did you really take the curlews for spirits?"

"Curlews? What do you mean?"

"Don't you know those birds? It is true that they travel in the depths of the night and that no one ever sees them. A curlew would not be recognized if it were shot because it has never been seen before. Accidentally wounding them is very rare for it is said that they fly more fleetly than the sparks from a tinder-box. I admit that they are strange birds. They brood in the clouds and the wind hatches them."

"No, my dear uncle, if they are really birds—curlews as you call them, they do not hatch in the clouds. But if they are not birds and their voices are those of spirits, as I am quite sure they are, they do not hatch at all. It is possible that their song resembles that of the curlews. I, too, hearing them for the first time said to myself—'hearken, the night-birds are passing.' But by listening to them I un-

derstood their words. They called to me. They made me grow wings. They taught me to run over the sea without getting wet as I did the night that I stayed on the Black Cow. They helped me to fly away from your home, through the skylight. All in all, they have comforted me and taught me marvelous things. I believe in them and I love them and I will always follow their advice and go where they tell me to."

"But you did not follow them just now," said his uncle.

"They did not want me to, but they showed me clearly by leaving the shores that I should not go to sea tonight. They flew away in the direction of the south. Tell me—is that where my father's home lies?"

"It is there all right, three leagues from the sea in a straight line."

"Then I must go there early tomorrow morning. I must go home to my parents and give them the money that I have earned."

"Very well, but they will keep it from you and you won't be able to travel any more."

"They can keep the money," said Clopinet.

"But how about traveling about?" said Uncle Laquille. "They won't let you leave."

"I can always go back to my spot on the cliff and gather a new lot of plumes," said the boy. "And this time I will have my parents' permission to become a sailor."

Clopinet followed his inclination. His uncle showed him the way home, and the next day at noon he was at the door of his father's house.

Mama Doucette had a great talent for making soup

Chapter VII THE APOTHECARY'S OFFER

THE first person Clopinet saw was his mother. She recognized him in spite of his changed appearance and clasped him in her arms, weeping with joy. Clopinet was moved by this demonstration of affection, for he had imagined in his loneliness that she had perhaps only cared a little for him. Now he learned that she loved him so much that she had done nothing but weep since he had gone away. Papa Doucy, brother François, and all the others hastened in and made a great fuss over him. They were surprised to see him so well dressed and carrying himself so well. He was not even lame any more! They thought that he had come from far away and that his travels had cured him.

Even François thought so, for he had not seen his uncle since the last time he had seen Clopinet.

Papa Doucy scolded Clopinet for having gone off against the wishes of his family and he did not fail to add that if Clopinet had not learned to earn his livelihood he would be a burden to all of them. Clopinet took everything his father said modestly. But when Papa Doucy had finished speaking, the boy handed him a purse saying: "I hope to continue to earn my living honestly without harming either man or beast. Here is what I have been paid for six months of effort. If this money is of any use to you, I beg you to accept it, dear papa. Next year perhaps I will be able to bring you more."

The whole family opened their eyes in amazement when they saw the gold francs that Clopinet had brought. But Papa Doucy shook his head.

"Where did you get this money, my boy? You must explain, for although I am only a poor farmer and haven't run off to sea, I know that a cabin boy may be paid well, but an apprentice of your age earns only his room and board."

Clopinet, seeing that his father suspected him of doing wrong, told the truth about the source of his wealth. He did not find him incredulous, for it was well known in this part of the country that

certain feathers were sought after by the bird-feather merchant.

But Papa Doucy had noticed that the night herons were no longer seen in the vicinity of Auge and so he knew that unquestionably Clopinet must have found them at some distant place. He was inclined to think that the boy had spent the summer making long trips. Clopinet refused to reveal the exact hiding place on the shore where he had been living. He had not even told his kind uncle. He knew that if he should speak of the Black Cows and the large cliff, he would not be permitted to return to live in so dangerous a place. And so he let his parents believe that he had just returned from a place in Scotland that he had heard his uncle speak of. He told them that he had had exceptional luck in hunting the night herons there.

He managed to answer to their satisfaction the many questions that they asked him. Since no one among them knew what foreign countries were like, he did not need to invent long stories. He answered that in Scotland they ate bread, vegetables, and meat just the same as any place else. He said that the trees did not have roots in the sky nor were there any marvels there nor in any other land that he had seen.

"That is fine," said his father after supper. "I am glad that you don't tell such falsehoods and silly tales as your Uncle Laquille. Continue to be sensible and all will go well with you, since you have the knack of doing business easily. I don't want to deprive you of your money. It is yours. I will invest it in good farm land that will belong to you alone. This will be the beginning of your fortune."

"If you don't want the money yourself," said Clopinet, "I would rather make use of it for taking trips, so that I can search for rare feathers."

What Uncle Laquille had predicted happened.

Papa Doucy did not want to listen to what Clopinet suggested. He could not imagine an investment in anything except plots of grass and apple orchards. He did not judge it wise to leave such a large sum at Clopinet's disposal. He praised him, nevertheless, for having shown wisdom enough to bring the money home for safekeeping. But he still believed the boy would spend it foolishly if he were given free rein with it. Poor Clopinet had to give in. He felt as if his wings had been clipped. He went to bed quite heavy-hearted, seeing his cherished hope of future voyages curtly dismissed. Then he dreamed that the spirits came to him and

said: "Have patience. We will not desert you. You have obeyed our wishes and we will never forsake you."

And so he submitted to his father's words and found some pleasure in sleeping in a cozy warm feather-bed again. For the last two weeks the dampness and cold had made him very uncomfortable in his grotto. He had not been able to protect himself from the rain and from the rushing wind. At home living was comfortable. Good bread and cider were never spared, and Mama Doucette had a great talent for making soup with bacon. Clopinet was now the object of her affection. She caressed and coddled him so tenderly that he could not resist. He allowed himself to be pampered by his family to the point of deciding to stay with them during the bad season.

Since he did not wish to lie, he told his father that he could not promise that he would never go back to sea. He wanted to have his parents give him his liberty, and to leave them in the spring without harsh words. Since he could not stay on the farm without doing something to help, he went back to his task of watching the cattle. But this simple labor bored him. The clumsy, slow beasts became more and more tiresome to watch. The

colorless pasturage made him sad. His spirit was forever flitting away to the cliffs. One day his father sent him to Dives to get some medicine at the apothecary's.

Dives was a very old town, but Clopinet, who was not interested in the past, found the district rather ugly. He, who cared only for the sea, had grown tired of seeing the flat, sandy wasteland of his father's farm. Dives was prettier than the country anyhow. Clopinet saw a narrow canal and he was told that this was the port that William the Conqueror had sailed from when he went to conquer England. The temptation to go aboard one of the small boats in the canal was so strong that Clopinet almost forgot his errand. But he resisted, and soon arrived at the apothecary's. Here, while he was waiting for the drug to be prepared, he tried to forget that he would soon be back at the farm. The object which absorbed his attention and threw him into ecstacy was a ruff called a sea-peacock which was perched on a branch inside a glass case. The apothecary, amused by the boy's interest, took the bird which seemed alive, as its open beak and bright eyes seemed to tell, and told Clopinet to touch it. It was stuffed. Clopinet had never heard of such a thing, and he begged the apothecary to explain.

The air of intelligence on the part of the boy surprised the apothecary and he asked Clopinet if he would like to be taught how to preserve and stuff such birds.

"Goodness," said the man, "if you want to help me in this work it will give me great pleasure, for you seem to have plenty of ambition."

He then told Clopinet that the priest of the parish and the lord of the neighboring chateau were great amateurs in the study of ornithology, or the science of birds and their classification into families and species. These two men collected as many birds as they could. The lord paid any price asked, and the priest as much money as he could get together. The district was very rich in both sea and land birds because of the marshes formed by the Dives canal. All hunters watched for game in the neighborhood and brought what they shot to the castle for the baron's stuffed collection. The apothecary had charge of the stuffing—he called it taxidermy. He knew this art very well, but he had no one to help him and was very busy. He was willing to pay Clopinet if he would learn the trade.

"Take me," said Clopinet. "I am sure I'll learn quickly. If you won't think I am boasting, I will tell you that I know birds better than you do. Here

is a bird which you call a 'sea-peacock.' I have seen the bird a hundred times but I did not know its name. But I do know how it hatches and how it selects its food. Now—the way you have stuffed it makes it look like a fighter. That is not true to nature. If you can tell me how to shape it, I will show you how the bird really looks."

The apothecary was a just man and quickly appreciated the attitude of Clopinet.

"Try—it can be shaped easily by working the iron wires which take the place of the bones and muscles. Go ahead and try. If you spoil it, it doesn't matter. A sea-peacock isn't very rare."

Clopinet hesitated a moment. He turned pale and trembled as he thought intently. Then, taking hold of the bird with great determination, he gave it a position so true and an appearance so proud without ruffling a single feather that the apothecary was quite taken back.

"I admit," he said, "that your position is more natural than mine. However, the first was more energetic."

"Don't you like it?" asked Clopinet.

"Well—mine was more malicious. Those birds are ferocious creatures."

"That's where you're mistaken," replied Clopinet

with conviction. "They aren't malicious when hunger doesn't goad them into battle. They never fight to harm anything. They fight for fun. It is a game they play. They all fly away, the males in one direction, the females with their young in another. The males choose a sand-heap where they get in a row formation. The females stay on another heap watching them. Then the old ones say to young: 'Let's go, laddies, let us see whether you know how to fight.' Two young ones come up and pommel each other until they drop from fatigue. Then two more approach. Sometimes there are two pairs battling at the same time, but always in single combat. There is never a big battle, never one band against another. When the hour of fun is ended, they go off together to fly or to eat and they are all the best of friends."

"That is very possible," said the apothecary, smiling. "If you have watched the birds closely, you know more about them than I do. I should like to see such a combat as you have just described. I think you are an observer and an artist by birth."

Clopinet did not understand what the apothecary meant, but his heart beat with joy at his kind words.

"Come back tomorrow," the man said, "I will teach you the trade, which is very easy if you like

it. I am sure you will since you really care about the birds. I will arrange it so that you can enter the service of the lord of the chateau. You will learn the natural history of birds and some day you will become a collector yourself perhaps. Who knows but that you were meant to be a scholar?"

Clopinet only understood one thing, that he was going to see many kinds of birds that he did not know, and that he would learn the names and countries of many whose songs and plumage he was already familiar with. He rushed home and without any trouble obtained permission to become a taxidermist.

"Since that is his idea," said Papa Doucy smiling to his wife, "and since the apothecary is a very fine man, I think that it is a fine idea for our boy to be at work near us where we can see him often."

Mama Doucette wished that he did not have to leave at all. But when her husband said these words with a smiling countenance, she could do nothing but approve. At first she was afraid that Clopinet would return to Scotland which she thought was situated at the end of the earth. They had never found out that the boy had not really been in Scotland at all. But soon she was convinced by the boy's own excitement that he was really going only as

far as Dives to study birds under the tutorship of the apothecary.

At the end of a month Clopinet knew how to make the preparation with which birds are preserved from decay and mites. He could skin the specimens with perfect cleanliness, turning the skin inside out like a glove without spoiling or ruffling a single feather. He knew the little bones which had to be left to fasten the iron wires to. And he had learned how to replace the skeleton framework of the bird with these wires. He could distinguish in his supply the glass eyes which were suited to each bird. He could stuff them with flax stuffing, retaining their exact form and he could sew up their backs with such skill that no one could detect the seam. He set the birds upon their feet, opened or closed their wings to his liking, and he was a past master from the very beginning at finding the most graceful and natural pose for every kind of flying creature.

The apothecary, who only cared about selling the chemical for preserving the birds, soon dreamed of having Clopinet enter the service of the Baron de Platecôte. The baron was fascinated by the study of birds. If Clopinet worked for him, the apothecary would be saved all the bother of stuffing the birds but he could still sell the materials for preserving

them. The apothecary was a kind as well as reasonable man. He was interested in Clopinet and recognized the boy's charm and intelligence. And so he took him to the chateau and presented him to the baron as a capable, hard-working, bright boy.

"I don't doubt that he is," said the baron politely, "but he is only a child. Certainly he is very neat and well-mannered, but he is just a little peasant who does not know anything."

"But he does know something about birds."

"He is so young that he can't know very much," said the Baron Platecôte.

"My dear baron," replied the apothecary graciously, "you can teach him whatever you wish him to know. You haven't a boy and you should have one to help you. He would be a good, faithful servant. I beg you to hire him quickly, before the priest gets a chance. He won't let him escape when he sees the work Clopinet has already done."

Then the apothecary opened the box he had brought with him and put three different specimens on the table. Each one was Clopinet's work. He had created such true shapes that the baron cried out in surprise and admiration.

"I see now that it is not you who have done this, my friend, for these specimens are much better than

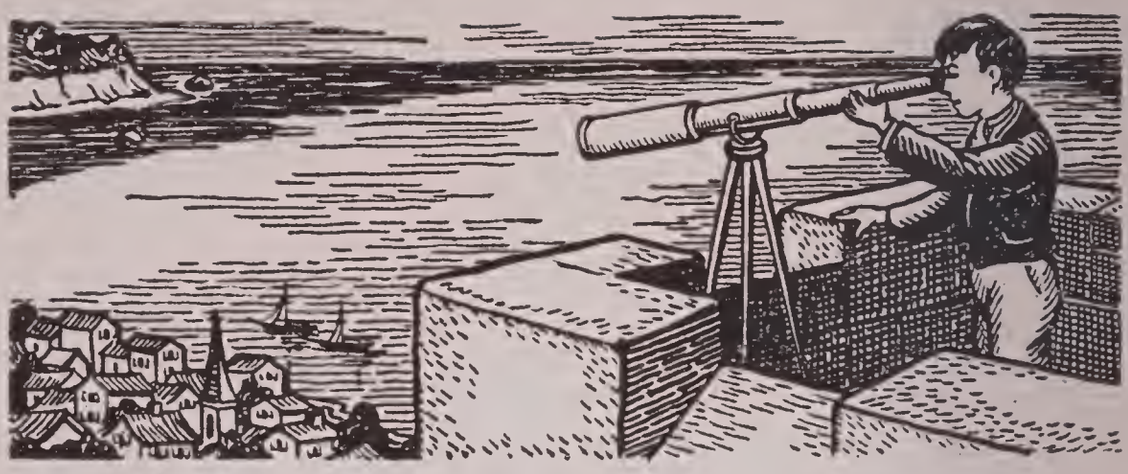
any I have seen from your workshop. Will you swear to me that it is really the work of this lad?"

"I swear it is so."

"His—all alone?"

"All alone."

"Very well—I will take him. And he will never regret having entered my service."



He was intoxicated with joy living so high in the air

Chapter VIII AT THE BARON'S HOUSE

THAT very day Clopinet went to live in the manor house of Platecôte in a little room situated high up at the top of the house. The first thing he did before he examined his charming room, was to put his head out of the window and become acquainted with the surrounding countryside. It was very beautiful, for the chateau was built on a high hill. On one side of the valley the Auge lay, on the other, the course of the Dive and the Orne with their woods and meads stretched out to the distant sea. Clopinet immediately recognized the jagged points of the large cliff. He saw them still better through a spy glass installed on the lookout turret which was perched above his room. He made

out the shape of the Black Cows showing their backs above the waves. In another direction he saw the home of his parents with its thatched roof and yellow-leafed apple trees. He was intoxicated with joy living so high up in the air with this marvelous spy-glass. He could see the flying birds through it as well as the lovely landscape. He found Trouville and discovered the cape to the right of Honfleur.

The next day he was even more joyous. He was installed in the laboratory where the phials and materials and tools of the apothecary had been brought. This room led right into the museum of the baron where Clopinet saw in the large glass cupboards many foreign birds of great value. It was all very fascinating to one who wished to learn the names and classification of every flying creature.

The baron explained the duties with which he was going to charge Clopinet. And the boy who had the self-confidence that comes with true-heartedness told him:

"Your lordship's collection of birds is badly arranged. Here is a little one that has been placed with other small birds because it is the same size. That won't do at all. It should be beside these large birds because it is one of their family. I will tell

you how I know. It has their beak and their claws. I know it eats as they do because I have seen it. If it isn't the exact kind that I know, at least it must be a cousin or a nephew for the resemblance is so close."

The baron let Clopinet chatter on, for he was not a talker himself. He admired the boy's intelligence and the sureness of his observations. In one morning Clopinet had learned all the names that the baron mentioned. But suddenly he saw the baron yawn and take a few strong snuffs of tobacco. He seemed to be tired of playing the rôle of teacher to an ignorant child.

"Your dear lordship," Clopinet said. "It is too early for me to enter into your service. You will have no pleasure instructing me. It will be better for me to learn things by myself. But first I will have to learn to read. Let me go to the priest. It is his profession to have patience. When I know enough, I will return to you."

"I should say not," said the baron. "You won't go to the priest. My valet is bright enough. He will instruct you."

The valet read fluently and wrote a fine hand. He knew enough French to write a passable letter at the dictation of the baron, who was a scholar and

a wit but of too high rank to spell very well. It was not the style among society people of those days to spell. De la Fleur, the valet, became schoolmaster to the little peasant boy. He sulked and showed very little patience. With the majority of children, patience is necessary. But for those, like Clopinet, who have a great ardor for work and who fear that their opportunity to learn may escape them even an indolent or irritable professor will be suitable. Clopinet tried hard not to tax the somewhat stupid mind of M. de la Fleur, and at the end of a year's time he could read, write, and count as well as his instructor.

That did not satisfy him. The scientific names of birds were in Latin, and many works which treated of the natural sciences were in Latin, too. Clopinet, whose Sundays were free, went to stuff birds for the priest on the condition that the good man would teach him Latin in return. In another year, Clopinet had acquired all the Latin he needed for his profession.

While he was teaching himself, he stuffed all the birds that were sent from the surrounding country-side and from foreign lands. He repaired and renovated the specimens in the collection which had been badly prepared or had worn out. He made a

better arrangement of the subjects, after an animated discussion with his patron who thought that he knew a great deal about the subject of birds and did not easily admit that he was mistaken. But Clopinet with his obstinate resolution and truthfulness was always able to persuade him. The baron, who was not stupid by any means, would shrug his shoulders and pretend to give in simply because of his good will.

"Do as you wish, then," he would say, "for so small a thing I do not wish to create ill feeling between us."

Frequently it was not a small thing, however. The priest, who had less of a collection but who was more learned than the baron, held Clopinet in great esteem and declared that if M. de Buffon had known the boy he would have made him his disciple.

M. de Buffon was a great French naturalist and writer of the time. Clopinet knew very well the respect that should be paid to so great a man. He had read many of his works. But Clopinet did not want either money or fame. Nothing tempted him except the wonders of nature. He still dreamed of voyages and discoveries to be made by himself alone.

Also he often thought of his hermitage on the great cliff, and the more he had of luxury in the

chateau, the more he missed his bed of rocks, his wild flowers, the song of the birds at liberty and those he had made friends with especially. The memory of that sweet intimacy made his heart sink within him.

"Where are they now," he wondered, "all those poor little companions of my solitude? Where are my godwits who imitated the bleating of goats and the barking of dogs so well that the first time I heard them I thought that they were real barnyard creatures? Where is the large lonely bittern who roared like a bull? Where are the pretty roguish plovers who cried in my ears in the very tones that the tailor used? Where race the curlew whose sweet childish voices called out to me in the dark nights and made me sprout enchanted wings of courage?"

Clopinet did not believe in the spirits of the night any more. He was no longer satisfied with so simple an explanation. He longed for those days when he had tried to distinguish the words of his little friends of the black sky and the storm winds.

When Clopinet reached the age of fifteen, he found that he had not only exhausted the study of birds, but that he had also received all the instruction he could from those who lived in the chateau and the surrounding neighborhood. He was seized with

a deep desire to go back to nature to discover the secrets that one cannot find in books. He felt ill and everyone remarked upon his pallor. He dreamed constantly of being free. Although he was grateful to his patron and deeply attached to him, he said that he must soon go away on a trip. He promised to collect for the baron everything he could that would be of interest in the museum. The baron reproached him for leaving his service. He offered to keep him longer, to raise his wages to the same sum as that of La Fleur, even to permit him to dine at the baronial table. Clopinet believed himself well-paid and he was not ashamed of eating in the butler's pantry. He told this to the baron, expressing his thanks but refusing politely.

"Perhaps," said the baron, "you are ashamed of wearing livery. In that case you may have a black smock made like that of the apothecary."

Clopinet still refused. He thought himself well-dressed. The baron grew very angry and treated Clopinet like a madman, threatened to abandon him entirely and to strike out of his will the little income he had left in the boy's favor.

Clopinet kissed his hand, telling him that even if the baron disinherited him he would always love him and would always be devoted to him. He told

Finally he reached the great cliff, and it seemed impossible to climb up to the hermitage

the baron that he did not wish to leave but that he knew he would surely die if he stayed in the chateau any longer. He was like the birds. He must be free!

The baron, seeing that nothing could be done, gave in to his wishes and discharged him bountifully, paying him his wages and adding a gift of money. Clopinet asked the baron to give him a portable telescope and some tools rather than the coin, and the baron did this but insisted that the boy keep the money as well.

Clopinet realized how kind the baron was. Judging himself truly ungrateful, he threw himself at the feet of his benefactor and renounced all his dreams. He begged for eight days' leave only, swearing to return at the end of that time and to do everything possible to take part in the life at the chateau which the baron had made so pleasant for him. The baron was deeply moved. He embraced Clopinet and provided him with everything necessary for a week's trip.

On a mild spring morning Clopinet started out by himself for the great cliff. He had done his work so conscientiously for the baron and had spent so much time studying that he had never indulged in even an hour's walk for many months. He had not

seen the Black Cows for a long time and he was impatient to discover what changes the sea had made in his absence. There had been many rumors of land slides, but since Clopinet had seen that the jagged summits of the great cliff still stood, he had only half believed what he had heard.

Clothed in a villager's smock, heavy foot gear, linen gaiters, with a woolen cap to keep the gusty wind from blowing on his head, Clopinet made his way to the dunes. He carried a traveling knapsack on his back, containing his tools, one or two volumes of catalogues, his telescope and some food. He did not follow the beach because there were many impassable spots where the marl had slid down. As he advanced, keeping half way up the side of the dunes, he saw a great change in the cracked masses of rock. Where there had once been plants, there was nothing but mud, making it difficult to cross. Likewise where the earth had been soft, it had now grown hard and an odd dry vegetation had sprouted. Clopinet did not know where he was. His former paths, known to him alone, had disappeared. He had to serve a new apprenticeship on the cliff, making new paths to guide his way, and keeping constant watch for crevices and precipices. Finally he reached the great cliff which had remained

upright, but there had been so many small landslides, the sides of it were steeper than ever before, and it seemed impossible to climb up to the hermitage.

In a short time he had tamed them completely

Chapter IX THE HERMITAGE AGAIN

CLOPINET was almost ready to abandon the idea of getting up to the grotto, but he was so happy to see his old retreat again that he persisted. After searching for a while, he finally succeeded in finding a difficult yet not too dangerous path. He ventured up a little way and at last reached the rocky place where to his great joy he found his garden, watch-tower, and grotto home quite intact. He was soon busy arranging the place for his visit. First he cut some grass which was to serve as his bed. After that he ate his frugal repast and lay down on the soft grass in his wild garden. The same flowers that had bewitched him in the past bloomed more beautifully than ever. He had a good nap, for he

had risen early in the morning and was tired from his long hike across the dunes.

As soon as he had rested, he wanted to climb up to the large cliff in order to see if it was still inhabited by the same birds. He reached the top after a hundred frights, but he did not find a single trace of the nests of the night herons or one of their plumes. They had actually abandoned the place. This must mean that destruction threatened the cliff. The instincts of the birds had warned them to leave for a safer spot. Where had they fled? Clopinet was not anxious to start his business of gathering aigrettes and selling them again. But he had wanted to see his old friends and to find out if they would recognize him after his long absence.

Straining his eyes, he saw that a large crevice had opened on the side of the cliff. He entered it cautiously. It was like a new street hollowed out in his deserted city. It led him to some lower blocks of stone near his own hermitage. There were many nests there. Here were eggs warming in the sun and waiting for evening to hatch. Many feathers lay on the rocks revealing the presence of the male birds. So this was where the night herons had come. Their choice near his own grotto proved to him that this part of the cliff was still solid. Happy at this

discovery, Clopinet entered his grotto completely at ease. He rejoiced at the thought of having his old friends so near at hand. He really loved solitude. There was too much to see to be lonely. He became acquainted once again with the entire length of the dunes and he learned by heart their new shore lines. With great joy he saw the Black Cows still blanketed with shells. He bathed in the fresh waters and spent long hours watching the birds that lived along the shore and near his encampment. They did not seem to recognize him and would not come near to take the bread he held out to them. But when he went away, they pounced upon the crumbs that he had thrown about, fighting over them with loud cries. He did not give up hope of taming them once more during the short time he was going to spend on the cliff. He decided to spend all his holiday in his grotto.

Clopinet was no longer the child who had led six months of his life in the wilds. Now he had learned the why and wherefor of many things which had been pleasant mysteries in the past. He had loved the sea, the rocks, the birds and the flowers before he knew just what makes these things beautiful. Study and comparison had taught him the marvelous, the terrible, or the kindly features of all of them.

Now he experienced twice the enjoyment that he had had before.

As if powerful Dame Nature had wanted to make a festival for him, she presented the same spectacle as she had three years before on the first evening he had settled in his cliff home. He saw at sundown a large mass of black clouds bordered by red fire, and the sea glowed like phosphorus. When he had retired inside his grotto, the wind rose and the scene became harsh and magnificent. Torrents of rain ran down the rocks of the hermitage. But the lovely and evasive moon still shone, nevertheless, turning the drops of waters on the foliage of the grotto door into diamonds. Clopinet slept in the midst of the tumult. He was joyous every time that the noise of the thunder awakened him. One of the thunderbolts was so violent that it startled him. Without realizing what he was doing, he found himself standing up beside his bed. A thousand plaintive voices filled the air above him, and a few moments later he felt himself being lashed by many wings flying noiselessly about him in the grotto. The encampment of his neighbors had been hit by lightning. The distracted females had left their broken nests. Tossed by the wind they had fallen into Clopinet's garden and taken refuge with clamors of fright and

despair in the grotto itself. He felt a surge of pity and did not chase them away. Lying down, he fell asleep in the midst of the poor birds, some of whom were lying half dead on his bed.

At the break of day all those that could still fly went away, but many had broken wings. Some were blind—others were dead or dying. Clopinet looked after his sadly stricken guests as best as he could. He went to investigate the ruin of the colony. A sad sight met his eyes. Many of the brooders were searching in vain for their eggs. He tried to repair their nests, but the electric bolt had cooked the eggs that were not broken, and when the birds saw this they lost all hope. Filling the air with shrieks of distress, they flew over the sea, disappearing in the mist so that it was impossible to tell what had become of them.

Clopinet, seeing that they did not return the next day nor the following day, decided that they had said good-by forever to the inhospitable coast. He spent his time with his patients. In a short time he had tamed them so that they ate out of his hands and allowed him to touch them. Then they began to hop about and some settled down in the grotto to sleep and others sat in the sunny garden to recuperate. The strange thing was that they seemed

to have forgotten the disaster that had happened to the unhatched birds. They did not try to see what had happened to them. They responded in tiny sad notes to the noisy call of the birds that left the grotto.

Clopinet was now able to study a thing which had always fascinated him, namely the degree of intelligence that animals develop when instinct no longer is sufficient for their preservation. He passed the day in collecting feathered guests of other species which he found lying on all sides of the cliff. By night his grotto was filled with them. He gave them all his bread and went to sleep hungry.

The next morning he had breakfast at Auberville, the village near-by where he had bought his provisions in the past. He carried everything he needed for his hospital back with him. During the day there were some deaths and some cures. He still went about picking up cripples on the heights and he could see the healthy ones watching. After he had left crumbs on his path, they would come and get them. It took a few days for them to become as familiar as they had been in the days when he first lived in the grotto. Clopinet thought that the ones that became tamest the quickest were the ones that he had tamed before.

But he noticed a great difference in the birds that

were well and those whose wounds had placed them entirely in his care. The sick ones seemed almost to beg him for constant attention. Because they could not fly or move about, they became selfish and greedy. Those that could find food for themselves, remained proud and aloof. Clopinet really preferred the proud ones, and although he took care of the ones who needed him most, he could not help disliking their laziness.

But he hoped to make them all well enough to go back to their former life. He was so well trained in reconstructing their bony framework in the workshop that he found it easy to set the broken claws and wings. But even those that he made well again, returned to him again and again. He had to scold them and finally beat them off, for they wanted to pluck him to pieces. In these strange combats the boy watched all the strange mannerisms of the plumed birds very closely.

At the end of the week Clopinet thought of returning to the chateau. It was by all means time to leave the grotto. The cliff had been badly damaged by the storm. Near the nest that had been struck by lightning, a new fissure had been made and the marl soaked by constant rain had started to fall into Clopinet's garden. The boy

hardly slept at all but kept constant watch. "Today we will have fine weather and the sun will dry up the mud. But if it rains tomorrow, I must get out of here in a hurry or I will behold the end of my little world," he thought to himself.

In order to save his birds from disaster, Clopinet decided to take them to the priest at Dives. He knew that the priest loved to keep live creatures about him, while the baron of Platecôte preferred killing and stuffing them. The priest was a real naturalist—the baron was merely a collector.

Clopinet, certain that the priest would take care of the birds, went inland to cut twigs and soon he had made a large enough basket for all of them. He decided that it would be too heavy for him to carry alone, as there were some very large birds in the group. So he went off to Auberville to rent a donkey which he led up to the foot of the cliff.

During the night the marl increased. Clopinet got up before daylight and assembled all his little friends. He gave them breakfast and put them carefully in his grass-lined basket. Loading them on the pack-saddle of the donkey, he led the beast along the seashore.

He arrived at Dives in the evening so that no one saw his precious cargo. He took it to the parsonage

and begged the priest to say nothing to the baron of how he had acquired his wealth of birds.

"I will take good care of them," cried the delighted priest. "The baron would not wait a moment to turn these charming live birds into mummies. He won't see them, rest assured."

Clopinet left the priest and his servant to ponder all evening long as to where to lodge their new guests. The boy took some plants he had gathered to the apothecary and finally returned to the manor of Platecôte feeling very heavy hearted.

He promised not to go far out on the beach

Chapter X THE STRANGE BIRD

THE next morning the baron found Clopinet at his post in the laboratory. He looked well and seemed recuperated, but two days later the poor child was just as pale and depressed as before. On being pressed with questions, he finally told his patron: "Dear baron, you will have to let me go. I cannot live here any longer. I thought that a little air would make me better. But I need more than that. I need at least a year, perhaps longer. . . . I don't know. I want you to take back your presents. I am not worthy of them. Do not despise me. I would die of sorrow and could not enjoy the liberty you let me have if you hated me."

The baron, seeing Clopinet spoke from the bottom

of his heart, showed himself suddenly to be a kind man. Consoling the boy as best he could, he promised that he would never cease being interested in him. But before letting him go, he asked Clopinet to open his heart to him. He felt that the boy was withholding some secret.

"All right," said Clopinet, "I will tell you everything, though it may seem foolish to you. I love the birds. The live birds—and I must live among them. I love seeing them in pictures, for painting gives a feeling of life. Some day, it seems to me, perhaps I may be capable of showing in line and color the creatures that I have known and understood. Taxidermy has become hateful to me. To live in the midst of these corpses. To embalm these poor creatures is more than I can bear. I feel as if I were mummifying myself. And there is still another thing—but I cannot tell you."

"What is it, Clopinet? Tell me everything for I am your best friend."

"All right," said Clopinet. "On both the land and the shore there are peculiar voices that often speak to me and that no one but myself can understand. It is generally thought that birds make cries of love and fear, of anger and fright, which they address to one another and which men cannot

understand. That may be possible, but since there are some that I have understood and that have told me what to do in time of trouble, I think that good spirits hover around us. I don't pretend that they perform miracles, but I think that they are good inspirations for us, changing our cowardly instincts to courage. All this astonishes you, dear baron, but I have heard you say many times that nature speaks to us in many voices."

The baron thought that Clopinet was, to a certain degree, right, but that more than likely the boy had a vivid imagination. It would be a good idea for him to relax his mind by traveling, the older man said. He took charge of everything. He placed Clopinet on a ship and provided the boy with money, clothes, and instruments.

Clopinet embarked alone for England, thence to Scotland and Ireland and the surrounding islands. Free and happy in the wildest places, he took notes of all that he saw. At the end of the year he returned to the baron, reporting a wealth of new observations.

The following year, after passing some weeks with his family and friends, Clopinet went to Switzerland, Germany, Poland, and as far as the Russian and Turkish provinces. Later he visited the north of Russia and a part of Asia, buying, wherever he

went, the birds that the people of the land killed in their hunts. He mummified these rare specimens and sent them to the baron whose collection became one of the most beautiful in France. But Clopinet kept his pledge not to kill anything and not to have anything killed on his account. It was his one creed, and the field of science perhaps lost some valuable specimens which he might have procured if he had not been so true to his idea. On the other hand, he enriched science with so many new and honest documents which corrected long established errors that the baron had nothing to complain about. For a long time the baron honored all the discoveries of his protege by publishing them. But he forgot to mention Clopinet's name. Clopinet did not object, having no ambitions for personal glory and being perfectly happy in the life he was leading. The baron acquired a certain reputation—the real aim of his efforts. He was not, however, ungrateful to Clopinet. He died making him his sole heir. Certain relatives protested the will, and Clopinet would surely have won the case but he disliked to quarrel, and accepted the first terms offered him. This gave him the manor of Platecôte, the museum, and enough money to live modestly and to be able to travel economically.

She thought she heard a glad voice cry: "I have found my wings of courage once again"

He considered himself a favorite of fortune and destiny.

He was able to make a tour of the world, while his family and those members of his Uncle Laquille's family lived in the chateau. There he returned from time to time to repair the baron's collection with vigilant care. He disappeared sometimes for years at a time without telling anyone where he was. He always returned sweet, tranquil, and generous beyond his means. Naturalists who had met him in far-away places told about his fine traits, his evidences of great kindness, and extraordinary courage. No one knew how he really lived. He continued his work for a long time without becoming ill, but great weariness and a cold he had acquired studying the customs of the eider duck in Lapland, caused him to become lame once more. He realized that he had not many years to live and spent his time sending the birds of his collection and a series of anonymous notes to various museums where scientists esteemed him without knowing who he was.

Clopinet desired to remain unknown. This did not prevent him from being loved and respected by the country folk who called him Monsieur le Baron. They would have thrown themselves in

the sea for him. He was very happy, and in the last year of his leisure made excellent drawings which were extremely valuable and were greatly admired after his death. When he felt his end coming on, weakened, and perhaps warned that he had not much longer to live, he wanted to see the great cliff once more. He was not very old and his family had no real anxiety about him. His faithful friends, the apothecary and the priest were much older than he but they were stronger and offered to accompany him. He thanked them but begged them to let him go alone. He promised not to go far out on the beach. His friends knew of his love of solitude and did not wish to intrude.

By evening, Clopinet had not returned. His brothers and friends became uneasy about him. Taking torches they started out to look for him. The priest and the apothecary went with François. All night they searched—exploring the coast. For the entire next day and many more they continued to watch the shore. But the dunes remained silent. And the sea did not give up a body.

And then an old woman who was fishing for shrimps on the beach told a strange tale. She said that she had seen a great sea-bird pass by, a bird like none she had ever seen before. It had swooped

down near the ground and touched her lightly on the head. And as she saw the strange bird winging its way into the night sky, she thought she heard a glad voice cry: "I have found my wings of courage once again."

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